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Contact:

Carmell Shade
Communications Specialist
(907) 278-3602 or cshade@bbnc.net

EPA Release of Draft Bristol Bay Watershed Assessment

Anchorage, AK - Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its long-awaited draft of the Bristol Bay Watershed Assessment, which it prepared based on scientific information from state and federal expert agencies, Pebble mine proponents and others. Its draft findings are that the clean and plentiful waters of Bristol Bay support a world-class wild salmon fishery that supports the cultures and subsistence needs of local people. As we know, Bristol Bay salmon also support a greater than 125-year-old commercial salmon fishery, and world-class sportfishing opportunities, both of which support important sustainable economies in the region. The draft assessment finds that, even if the Pebble mining plans work perfectly, there would be a direct loss of 55 to 87 miles of salmon streams, a large reduction in water flow that would reduce salmon, trout and Dolly Varden production, and harm downstream areas as well. If the Pebble mining infrastructure fails, moreover, salmon and other fish would be impacted for decades if not forever, including the "near-complete loss of North Fork Koktuli River fish populations." (Exec Summary at ES-19), and the loss of "28% of the Chinook salmon run in the Nushagak River..." (ES-20).

The EPA is planning to hold public meetings regarding the assessment in Anchorage and throughout the Bristol Bay region. Information on the public meetings and how to submit comments is available at <http://www.epa.gov/region10/bristolbay/>.

The draft watershed assessment is available at <http://www.epa.gov/region10/bristolbay/>.

Links to the draft watershed assessment, the meeting schedule and other resources may also be found at <http://www.PebbleWatch.com>, a Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC) resource to keep shareholders up to date on Pebble.

Statement of Jason Metrokin, President and CEO of Bristol Bay Native Corporation, on the EPA's Draft Bristol Bay Watershed Assessment:

BBNC appreciates EPA's scientific effort in creating its Draft Watershed Assessment, which provides Bristol Bay residents an unprecedented resource for reviewing current scientific knowledge about our region and helping determine the sustainability of potential development. What we have read so far suggests that EPA's draft findings regarding mining the Pebble deposit largely align with our own: The science exists now to show that the proposed Pebble mine does not fit with a sustainable future for Bristol Bay, and should not be allowed to proceed.

BBNC continues to review the draft, and will contribute more detailed input and response during EPA's public comment process. BBNC will have a presence at the upcoming public meetings in Anchorage and in the Bristol Bay region. We encourage our shareholders, area residents and the general public to participate as well, by reviewing the document and taking the opportunity to provide input to EPA.

Background

About the Assessment: The Draft Bristol Bay Watershed Assessment is the culmination of nearly fourteen months of work by the EPA to collect and synthesize all available scientific information about the Bristol Bay Watershed – in particular the Nushagak and Kvichak drainages—into one comprehensive analysis. The purpose of the assessment is to better understand how future large-scale development projects may affect water quality and Bristol Bay’s salmon fishery, an extraordinary salmon resource for the United States.

The EPA is using a rigorous scientific process to complete the watershed assessment that includes participation from federal and state agencies, public and industry input, tribal consultation, and a scientific peer review. The watershed of the Bristol Bay region appears uniquely designed to produce salmon, with the majority of Bristol Bay salmon originating and developing in the Nushagak and Kvichak drainages. These salmon are critical to the subsistence and culture of Bristol Bay residents. Most of the communities in Bristol Bay are self-reliant, and do not have interconnected road and utility systems. The vast majority of households rely on subsistence fishing and hunting for a large percentage of their food. Salmon harvesting is essential to the continued social and cultural viability of the region’s people.

Bristol Bay supports the largest sockeye salmon fishery in the world and supplies nearly 50 percent of the world’s commercial wild sockeye salmon supply. As such, commercial fishing is essential to the region’s economy. The commercial fishing and seafood processing industries employ approximately 12,000 people annually in Bristol Bay, and those jobs produce more than \$160,000,000 in annual earnings and wages.

About BBNC: BBNC is one of 13 Alaska Native Regional Corporations formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. The corporation has over 9,000 Eskimo, Aleut, and Athabascan shareholders with ancestral ties to the Bristol Bay region. BBNC supports responsible resource development, defined as development that is fiscally, environmentally and socially sustainable, serving the long-term interests of our people, our region, and our businesses.

More information can be found at www.bbnc.net.

About Pebble Watch: Pebble Watch is a communications initiative of the BBNC Land Department to keep BBNC shareholders and interested parties up-to-date on the proposed Pebble mine project. Pebble Watch does not seek to reflect current BBNC Board or corporation views, but focuses on the mission of informing BBNC shareholders on the project’s development and permitting process, including how to access and understand available resources and scientific data. The project consists of a web site, Facebook updates and educational publications related to science and permitting.

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